

It appears to be a very old plant for the rhizome is large and covered with rough scales, and has grown out in two directions, the ends being about eight inches apart. One end was dead, but the other though still alive was being used badly by chickens that had been scratching at it. It was growing in a rather dry place near the end of a brick wall under *Crepe Myrtle* (*Lagerstroemia indica*, L.) bushes. There might have been more plants but for the chickens.

I found a dozen or fifteen plants of *Pteris longifolia* L. growing on the brick wall of an old building on Congress street, near Davis Avenue in the city of Mobile. There are growing with it *Pteris serrulata*, L. and *Dryopteris patens*, (Sw.) Kuntze and several kinds of weeds. The wall is covered with moss and is shaded by a tree. I have observed it growing there for two years. It may be found in other parts of the city but this the only place I have seen it growing. This fern is not reported in Mohr's Plant Life of Alabama, and as far as I know this is the first time it has been reported from the state. —E. W. GRAVES, *Spring Hill, Ala.*

ON THE VIABILITY OF CERTAIN FERN SPORES.—The spores of some of our common wild ferns germinate only a short time after they have reached maturity as, for example, those of the *Osmunda* species which remain viable for only a few days. In other species as *Pteris aquilina* L., the spores are known to retain their power to germinate for two years.

Beginning with the summer of 1910, the writer collected in the vicinity of Madison fronds of a number of species of ferns. The spores of all the species which germinated a short time after they were collected were kept in packets in the botanical laboratory. The spores of the different species were sown again October 4,

1918, on the surface of tap water and nutrient solutions. The spores of three species proved to be especially long-lived. Those of *Pellaea atropurpurea* L. collected eight years ago possess a very high percentage of germination. Woronin* (1908) sowed spores of *Notholaena Eckloniana* Kunze, a species closely related to *Pellaea*, and found that they germinated twelve years after they had been collected. Spores of *Pellaea gracilis* Hook collected by the writer in 1912 still germinate. The spores of *Aspidium thelypteris* Swartz collected in 1911 germinate at the present time, but not so abundantly as those of the other two species.—W. N. STEIL, *University of Wisconsin, Madison*.

A NEGLECTED CHARACTER IN THE BEECH-FERNS.—Most of our fern books, from Eaton's *Ferns of North America* on, make the statement that the long and broad beech ferns, though undoubtedly different species, are often hard to tell apart; and amateurs may frequently be heard to complain that the statement is only too true. So it is if leaf-form alone is considered; for in ferns, as in other plants, the leaf is apt to vary considerably in shape and cutting with age and from the effect of external conditions. But there is one detail which the writer, in the examination of some scores of specimens, has found nearly invariable and very helpful in deciding doubtful cases.

This character is to be found in the scales which in both species are borne along the main mid-rib on the under side of the frond. They are too small to be seen clearly with the naked eye, but can be readily made out with a low-powered magnifying-glass, such as most of us possess. In the long beech fern they are rather

* Woronin, Helene. (1908) Apogamie und Aposporie bei einigen Farne. *Flora* 98: 101-162. f. 1-72.